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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FROM : AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

DATE: November 25, 1976

SUBJECT: Sources and Direction of Somali Foreign Policy: Short-term Analysis

REF :

BEGIN SUMMARY: The following is the Embassy's working hypothesis of the sources and direction of Somali foreign policy. Stated briefly, we believe that the GSDR has identified its interests with and committed itself wholeheartedly to the Soviet connection over the short run. Nevertheless, there are factors at work which could make the connection less exclusive over time. As a here-and-now analysis, emphasizing the limits on and the possibilities open to the U.S. at the present moment, the Embassy intends this paper as a short-term guideline for U.S. Government policy and activities in Somalia, as well as a focus for reporting and intelligence collecting activities by the Mission.

To avoid misunderstanding, we would point out that this paper is a distillation of the available information and not a catalogue of every nuance of Somali policy. Indeed, the latter would be impossible in anything short of a book, given the subtle, even elusive, nature of the Somali "character". The Somalis make good use of a gift for cajolery and flattery to play off their foreign suitors against each other. Thus, there are Arab diplomats in Mogadiscio who believe that it will only take a little more oil money to translate the Somalis' private assurances of Islamic and Arab solidarity into a more orthodox Arab-oriented foreign policy, while staring in the face of the GSDR's massive commitment to the USSR.

We would also point out that Somali policy is embedded in and, to a large extent, dependent upon the totality of events in the Horn of Africa. As such, it is useful to remember that seemingly immutable facts, including the GSDR's vociferous attachment to the USSR, could change in response to developments in the region. The Soviets' apparently growing ties to Ethiopia are very important in this respect. There are also factors within Somali society, e.g. the very elusiveness that bedevils Western and Arab

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dealings with the Somalis, that could make the Soviets' long-term grip less secure than present appearances would suggest. Our broad policy recommendations in (XI), therefore, are designed for current circumstances and should not inhibit future U.S. freedom of action in Somalia or the Horn. END SUMMARY

SOURCES AND DIRECTION OF SOMALI FOREIGN POLICY

I. The leadership of the GSDR has four main preoccupations:

- A. retaining personal power,
- B. over the longer term, consolidating power in the hands of the Marehan (President Mohamed Siad Barre's) clan,
- C. extending control over neighboring French, Ethiopian and Kenyan territories inhabited by ethnic Somalis, and
- D. accelerating economic development.

II. In all cases, the leaders need a foreign patron or patrons to provide the money, equipment, know-how and international political support to accomplish these objectives.

III. The only foreign powers capable of entering into the kind of encompassing relationship implied by (II) are the U.S. and the USSR. China and the Arab states can be useful to Somalia in a variety of ways but lack the all-round capability, especially in sophisticated military equipment and techniques, of the superpowers. For all practical purposes, the U.S. identification and military supply relationship with France, Ethiopia and Kenya make the USSR the only practical source of support for Somalia at the present time.

IV. The fervor of the Somali leaders' attachment to the Soviets is not mere posturing but is related to their perception that the Soviet connection offers several unique advantages, fitting in well with their own order of priorities:

- A. the Leninist model of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party offers an excellent vehicle for the institutionalization of Siad's personal and Marehan rule,

- B. the Soviets, Cubans and East Germans are past masters at organizing and running the secret police and militia forces needed to back up Siad's fiat,

C. potential power vacuums on Somalia's borders, e.g. the independence of the TFAI in 1977, the Eritrean uprising and weakening of the Ethiopian central government, and the approaching disappearance of the aged Kenyan President, create political and military opportunities for the GSDR and put a premium on Soviet military hardware and political support and, last but not least,

D. the theory of Marxism-Leninism, with its emphasis on mobilization and discipline, provides a useful model for rapid economic development.

V. The situation on the borders, with the attendant possibility of territorial aggrandizement, is seen as a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence. This is the leaders' chance, after seven repressive years in office, to earn genuine political legitimacy and a permanent place in the history of the Somali people. Moreover, it is an opportunity to neutralize potential bases of operation by anti-regime Somali exiles. It should not be overlooked that the GSDR views Djibouti as a threat to its position in the restive Issa/Issaq-dominated northern districts of the country. At the least, the GSDR will have to contend with the inflow of goods and ideas, particularly conservative Arab ones, from Djibouti.

VI. The USSR and its close friends have responded generously to the Somalis' needs in all except one area: providing capital and know-how for economic development. The leaders, therefore, have had to supplement Soviet economic aid from non-Communist sources, including the EEC, Italy, West Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Somalia has been able to accomplish this successfully by trading on its former colonial ties with Italy, as well as its African and Muslim credentials, in the ACP Group of the Lome Convention, the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity.

VII. The GSDR's foreign policy, thus, is composed of these elements:

A. trying to manipulate the fluid political situation in Djibouti in its own favor,

B. trying to weaken and isolate Ethiopia and Kenya, internally and in international forums,

C. preparing its regular and irregular military forces for any contingency on the borders,

D. expanding the depth and scope of bilateral cooperation under the aegis of the 1974 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union,

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E. allowing the USSR to construct and use strategic air, communications and naval facilities on Somali territory,

F. supporting Great Russian imperialist objectives worldwide,

G. in Africa, attempting to build a bloc of Marxist states, which now potentially includes Angola, Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Mozambique, and Madagascar, in addition to Somalia, and

H. maintaining residual bridges to non-Communist aid donors, especially through its links with the EEC and the Arab League.

VIII. The GSDR has called its foreign policy one of "non-alignment", but its definition has nothing to do with the dictionary meaning of the term. On the contrary, it is a self-conscious and cynical label, which permits the GSDR to pursue Soviet foreign policy objectives in Third World forums. Like Somalia's "Arabism", which does not prevent the GSDR from doing everything it can to undermine the country's Islamic heritage in the name of scientific socialism, the "non-aligned" label does not prevent the GSDR from submitting every important international issue to the acid test of Soviets interests. In recent months, moreover, the term "non-alignment" has been heard only infrequently and there has been a spate of official statements and communiques underlining the GSDR's adherence to a policy of "peaceful coexistence" and "proletarian internationalism"; the phraseology is neither accidental nor casual but marks the GSDR's growing organic links with the "socialist commonwealth" headed by the USSR.

IX. The GSDR's attitude toward the U.S. is doubly negative: the U.S. is the friend of Somalia's enemies, France, Ethiopia, and Kenya, and the enemy of Somalia's friend, the Soviet Union. No basic improvement of U.S./Somali relations can be expected while that alignment continues or, stated another way, as long as Siad is convinced that Soviet and GSDR interests in the Horn remain parallel. The regime's increasing self-confidence, especially if the political evolution in the Horn continues to be favorable, conceivably could take some of the sting out of Somali policy and induce the GSDR to look more benignly on the U.S. This may make it possible to eliminate some of the pinpricks that trouble U.S./Somali relations, e.g. arbitrary delays in approving Embassy import permits and in granting Somali entry visas. But this is the limit of realistic U.S. expectations in present circumstances, and bilateral relations could still come to a complete break if any of the situations on Somalia's borders deteriorates to the point at which the GSDR feels it must openly intervene.

X. Over the longer term, however, the situation inside Somalia is far from monolithic and hopeless. There are factors operating that could reduce the value of the Soviet connection to Siad or undermine his regime. Thus, there are persistent reports that:

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A. Russians, despite their ideological camouflage, are widely disliked as a people,

B. the Somali officer corps, where the Soviet penetration is, perhaps, deepest, fears and resents its Russian mentors; even Siad is not immune from the fear that the Soviets may be cultivating a more pliant and ideologically pure candidate for the top position in the party and government of Somalia (First Vice President Mohamed Ali Samatar).

C. the other major clans remain unreconciled to Siad's efforts to institutionalize Marehan power and raise up lesser clans to positions of authority as allies of the Marehans; in particular, the Issa/Issaq clans are neither trusted by nor trust Siad.

D. many Somalis are critical of unrestrained police power, forceable resettlement of nomads and persistent consumer goods' shortages, and

E. the Soviets' very success in identifying themselves with Siad's politico-military aims puts them in the position of producing results or losing credibility; if Siad is unable to point to the recuperation of at least one of the three "lost" points of the Somali star in the measurable future, especially if the USSR's rapprochement with Ethiopia is the cause of the frustration of the GSDR's territorial ambitions, he may ask himself whether the Soviet connection, or at least the exclusive connection that we know at the present time, is still in Somalia's interests.

XI. In the circumstances, the U.S. should:

A. adopt a low-key and scrupulously "correct" posture with respect to the GSDR, emphasizing the value of a frank dialogue, even where there is known disagreement, and insisting on the principle of reciprocity in the treatment of the respective diplomatic Missions. U.S. spokesmen should draw on the parallel of U.S./Soviet "detente" as a model for U.S./Somali relations in order to show that limited accommodations are possible,

B. avoid any contribution to the political and economic viability of the GSDR, by, for example, keeping our outstanding aid offer in the deep freeze,

C. but seize opportunities for "people-to-people" contacts, such as the CU basketball program and any follow-on cooperation in the field of sports requested by the GSDR,

D. discreetly expose the hollowness of the GSDR's claim to non-alignment by making Arab and other "Third World" states aware of the

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GSDR's role as a Soviet surrogate; in this connection, we should not press our request for a U.S. Navy ship visit to Somalia (which the GSDR would use as "proof" of its non-alignment),

E. encourage and increasingly work together with friendly powers to keep up the pressure on the GSDR to reduce its dependence on the USSR,

F. feed Somali suspicion of Soviet motives and intentions; we should point to increasing Soviet and Eastern European assistance to Ethiopia; to Soviet exploitation of Somali resources (i.e. shell and fin fisheries); to the far-reaching operational role of Soviet advisers in the Government and armed forces; and to the economic burden of Soviet loans, and

G. discreetly support French, Ethiopian and Kenyan efforts to preserve and strengthen stability in their respective territories.

XII. For the rest, the U.S. should keep an open mind on the evolving political situation in the totality of the Horn of Africa.



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